



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

PEABODY PAIR INDICTED ON CHARGES OF ALIEN SMUGGLING AND OPERATING AN ILLEGAL MONEY REMITTAL BUSINESS

BOSTON—Two Peabody residents were indicted yesterday on federal charges of alien smuggling and operating an unlicensed money remittal business.

United States Attorney Michael J. Sullivan; Matthew J. Etre, acting special agent-in-charge of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Joseph A. Galasso, special agent-in-charge of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation; and Robert L. Champagne, chief of the Peabody Police Department, announced that Mario Viana, age 39, of 111 Central Street, Peabody, and Julio Viana, age 37, of Peabody, were indicted yesterday by a federal Grand Jury. Mario Viana is charged with four counts of alien smuggling. Mario and Julio Viana are both charged with one count of operating an unlicensed money remittal business. Additionally, Julio Viana is charged with thirteen counts of structuring.

According to the Indictment and documents previously filed with the Court, it is alleged that Mario Viana is the owner of a convenience store “Family Market” located at 47 Main Street in Peabody. Julio Viana, Mario Viana’s brother, also worked at the store.

It is alleged that Mario Viana assisted in smuggling aliens into the United States charging upwards of \$10,000 for each person. After being smuggled into the United States, the illegal aliens would work at Family Market to repay the debt they incurred. It is also alleged that Mario Viana would require the illegal aliens to provide him with a deed to property in their country of origin as collateral until the smuggling fee was paid.

It is further alleged that Mario and Julio Viana operated an unlicensed money remittal business out of the Family Market location. In January 2004 the Family Market, which up to that point had been operating a money remittal business legally, had its money remittal license terminated. It is alleged that despite the license termination, the Vianas continued to operate their money remittal business, wire transferring a total of nearly \$1.1 million within the United States and abroad from late January to July of 2004.

It is further alleged that Julio Viana was responsible for making structured financial transactions of less than \$10,000 to avoid reporting requirements of banks.

Both defendants were arrested on June 28, 2005 in connection with the charges and were ordered detained pending trial following a detention hearing. If convicted, Mario faces a mandatory minimum sentence of three years and a maximum of ten years in prison on two of the alien smuggling charges, a maximum sentence of ten years in prison on the remaining two alien smuggling charges, and five years in prison on the operating an unlicensed money remittal business charge. Julio faces five years in prison on the operating an unlicensed money remittal business charge and five years in prison on the structuring charges. Both defendants also face up to three years of supervised release and a \$250,000 fine on each of the charges.

The case was investigated by ICE and the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, with assistance from the Peabody Police Department. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Nadine Pellegrini, Deputy Chief of Sullivan's Major Crimes Unit.

The details contained in the Indictment are allegations. The defendants are presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.